



American Coaches' Association Hall of Famer John Noce demonstrates proper throwing techniques to USAG Schweinfurt children during an MLB envoy clinic. Photo by Kimberly Gearhart

Professional baseball coach holding youth clinics

HEIDELBERG, Germany – A renowned baseball coach has been holding clinics at Army garrisons throughout Europe, teaching hundreds of children the basics of the sport and more.

The German communities of Kaiserslautern, Schweinfurt and Wuerzburg are among the sites that have hosted John Noce, who played professional baseball, coached American and Italian Olympic teams and was inducted into the American Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1993.

Installation Management Command-Europe is providing these clinics in partnership with Boys and Girls Clubs of America and Major League Baseball.

Close to 300 children participated during the clinic at Kaiserslautern's Twin Fields on Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

"I'm here to teach them to properly throw, catch and hit the ball so they stay away from bad habits," said Noce, who has worked as an envoy coach in Austria, Romania and Holland. "It's very hard to correct bad habits in throwing, catching and hitting."

Noce taught children, ages 6 to 18, baseball fundamentals during two seven-hour clinics. He also discussed education, scholarships, sportsmanship, dedication, attitude and what top college programs are seeking in recruits.

The garrison's Youth Sports director Anthony Broccoli said Noce and other MLB Envoy coaches could be called ambassadors for baseball because they travel throughout the world promoting it as an international sport, such as these clinics to military kids through youth and teen centers.

For Sandy Merchat, Landstuhl Middle School physical education teacher, this clinic was a great opportunity.

"We don't have fields over at the school, and there are a lot of kids who don't play baseball or softball. This is an opportunity for them to get out here and see what they can do," Merchat said.

Noce and several garrison youth baseball and softball coaches taught the Kaiserslautern participants through various throwing, catching and hitting exercises.

Aspiring baseball players in Schweinfurt and Wuerzburg – as well as volunteer coaches and staff members from Child and Youth Services – also received two days of skills clinics from Noce in areas ranging from throwing a ball to motivation techniques.

"You're going to get a chance today to get some baseball education," said Hal Snyder, Schweinfurt Army Community Services director,

addressing the children as the clinic began.

Noce began the clinic stressing that playing baseball isn't easy; it takes practice and basic skills, like ball handling.

"You've got to know how to throw the ball, and you've got to know how to catch it," Noce said, pacing in front of the children with a baseball in hand.

Noce demonstrated how to get into an athletic position with feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent—a crucial stance for any sport.

Once divided into five groups, children were given baseball gloves, balls, and drilled on the basics of throwing and catching a baseball. SAS and Youth Sports employees and volunteers also helped to direct children in proper form – while dodging the occasional wild pitch.

The Major League Baseball Envoy Coach program has been MLB's flagship international project since 1993. Since the program's inception, MLB has sent hundreds of professional coaches to more than 75 different countries to work on baseball development projects.

Story by Kimberly Gearhart, USAG Schweinfurt Public Affairs and Christine June USAG Kaiserslautern Public Affairs



Paige Bossart, 12, Landstuhl Elementary and Middle School sixth grader, drives the ball Monday during the MLB clinic at USAG Kaiserslautern's Twin Fields on Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. (Photo by Christine June)